(ii) Any specific request for extration of fugitive criminals, suspected to be in any foreign country including Gulf countries, is pursued by our Missions abroad with the local authorities at the appropriate levels. The normal procedure for extradition involves both an administrative and judicial process in the requested country as per the local laws and there is no time limit for completion for this process.

Posting of Passport Offices Employees Abroad

2362. SHRI C. O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any demand from the employees of Passport Offices for their posting in the Indian Missions abroad; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken by Government in this regard alongwith reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) While there is a demand from the employees of the Passport Offices for postings in Indian Missions abroad, postings are not given to these employees since there are no posts in Indian Missions abroad borne on the strength of Central Passport Organisation.

Strategic Alliance Between India, Russia and China

2363. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether following months of U.S. led NATO bombings on Yugoslavia and the bombing of Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in May this year, any moves were made to forge a strategic alliance between India, Russia and China; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard indicating the outcome of bilateral or trilateral talks, if any, held in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Our relations with the Russian Federation are time-tested and characterised by continuity, trust and mutual under-

standing. A Declaration on Strategic Partnership between India and the Russian Federation is expected to be signed during the Next Indo-Russian Summit. We are trying to further improve and normalise our relations with the People's Republic of China.

(b) In our bilateral interaction with both the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, the subject of the NATO action against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which took place from March 24-June 10, 1999 had come up for discussions. There has been no triagular interaction between India, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. It is however significant that the three countries arrived at similar positions on the subject, independently and without prior consultations.

Commercialisation of Issuance of Passport

2364. SHRI C. O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government accept that possession of the passport is right of the Indian Citizen;

(b) if so, what were the necessities for franchising the system instead of simplifying the issue of passport;

(c) whether the Government also intend to commercialise the issue of passport by introducing Tatkal system as in the Railway;

(d) if so, the reasons for such commercialisation and the reaction of the public to the scheme; and

(e) what are the hindering reasons for Government in the existing system which can be simplified to a large extent?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) An Indian citizen has a right to get a passport when needed, issuance of which is subject to his or her fulfilling the necessary conditions and requirements to the satisfaction of the concerned authorities, as required under the Passport Act, 1967.

(b) There is no proposal with the Government for franchising the issue of passport.